This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the instant application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1.   A method for enabling phone users to participate in an instant messaging based conference, comprising the steps of:

   receiving a speech input from a telephone through a teleconferencing system;

   transcribing the speech input to a first text message;

   transmitting the first text message to a plurality of devices coupled to an instant messaging network belonging to the instant messaging based conference;

   receiving a second text message from any one among the plurality of devices on the instant messaging based conference;

   converting the second text message to a speech output; and

   transmitting the speech output to the telephone via the teleconferencing system.

2.   The method of claim 1, wherein the step of converting the second text message further comprises the step of using a voice signature associated with any one among the plurality of device coupled to the instant messaging network to provide the speech output with a personalized voice at the telephone.

3.   The method of claim 1, wherein the step of converting the second text message comprises the step of converting the second text message to the speech output by using text-to-speech conversion.

4.   The method of claim 1, wherein the method further comprises the step of translating the first text message to another language to provide a translated first text message.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the method further comprises the step of translating the second text message to another language to provide a translated second text message for subsequent speech output.

6~~7~~. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of transmitting the first text message comprises the step of transmitting a text stream.

7~~8~~. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of converting the second text message comprises the step of converting by using text-to-speech synthesis.

8~~9~~. A system for enabling phone users to participate in an instant messaging based conference, comprising:

an input port for receiving a calling party's speech input via a teleconferencing system;

a speech-to-text converter for converting the calling party's speech input to a text message for transmission to an instant messaging system; and

a text-to-speech converter for converting text messages received from the instant messaging system to a speech output for transmission to the teleconferencing system.

9~~10~~. The system of claim 8~~9~~, wherein the system further comprises a telephone coupled to the teleconferencing system.

10~~11~~. The system of claim 8~~9~~, wherein the system further comprises an instant messaging device selected from the group of devices comprising a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, and a smartphone.

11~~12~~. The system of claim 8~~9~~, wherein the system further comprises a translator for translating the text message into another language for transmission to at least one among an instant messaging device as text and to a telephone coupled to the teleconferencing system as a speech output.

12~~13~~. The system of claim 8~~9~~, wherein the system further comprises a text-to speech synthesizer.

13~~14~~. The system of claim 12~~13~~, wherein the text-to-speech synthesizer uses a voice signature of the called party in producing the audible output.

14~~15~~. The system of claim 10~~11~~, wherein the instant messaging device further comprises a display for displaying at least one among the text message from the calling party and text messages from the instant messaging device.

15~~16~~. The system of claim 10~~11~~, wherein the text streams are received and transmitted over an instant messaging/chat system in substantially real-time.

16~~17~~. The system of claim 10~~11~~, wherein the text streams are received and transmitted over a messaging system using data transmission protocols.

17~~18~~. The system of claim 8~~9~~, wherein the system further comprises a user profile for converting at least one among text messages from an instant messaging device into a customized speech output for transmission to the calling party and text messages from the calling party to alternate text messages as defined by a user.

18~~19~~. A machine-readable storage, having stored thereon a computer program having a plurality of code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform the steps of:

receiving a speech input from a telephone through a teleconferencing system;

transcribing the speech input to a first text message;

transmitting the first text message to a plurality of devices coupled to an instant messaging network belonging to the instant messaging based conference;

receiving a second text message from any one among the plurality of devices on the instant messaging based conference;

converting the second text message to a speech output; and

transmitting the speech output to the telephone via the teleconferencing system.

~~19~~20. The machine-readable storage of claim 18~~19~~, wherein the machine-readable storage is further programmed to translate at least one among the first text message to an alternate first text message and the second text message to an alternate second text message for transmission as a speech output.